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“CHRIST’S MIRROR IMAGE” – ‘Identification Stage’

“HE’S THE ONE WHO CAN FORGIVE ME FOR ALL MY SINS.”

(John 1:29; Mark 2:5; Mark 2:10; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:9)

Intro ... Today I invite you to take a second step with me down the ‘Investigative Pathway’ on our ‘Journey Toward Christ-Likeness’.

Last week we entered into **Stage One** of this Journey – **The Identification Stage**. During these next few weeks we will be seeking to ‘Identify Jesus Christ Accurately’ so that we can be sure that we have ‘Surrendered Ourselves To Him Completely’.

Obviously, we cannot become ‘Like Christ’ unless we are consciously ‘Surrendered To Christ’ and to His Holy Spirit, ‘Pneuma’ Himself.

‘Pneuma’ is the one who has been assigned the task of ‘Transforming us’ little by little, day by day, into the very ‘Likeness of Christ’ but before He can ‘Form this likeness in our hearts’, he must first ‘Form this likeness in our minds’. Picturing Jesus accurately is the necessary first step in this process.

Last week I shared with you the ...

KEY QUESTION IN THIS IDENTIFICATION STAGE ...

“**WHO** is He and **HOW** does that **RELATE** to me?”

That’s the question that was raised by everyone who met Christ in his own day. That’s the question that every unbeliever must raise today. That’s the question that I am asking all of us to raise in our own minds each week.

Here was ...

LAST WEEK’S KEY REVELATION...

“Jesus is the One who **KNOWS** all about me - the One before Whom my **LIFE** is laid bare - the One to Whom I must give **ACCOUNT**.”

(John 1:48; John 4:39; Luke 5:22; Revelation 2:23)

This is a critical beginning ... Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God who came to earth. He possesses complete knowledge of each of us. There is nothing in our lives hidden from His Awareness. Someday we will stand before Him and give account of all we have thought and felt and done.

Now that is a sobering that ... We must be ready for that moment though we know that in and of ourselves we will never be ready.

It's the first thing that unbelievers acknowledge whenever they truly encounter Christ ... they realize that they stand in a very precarious position before Him. They fall far short of what He is and what He stands for and they know it.

However, those who have given their lives to him, those who truly do love Him, can take great comfort in the fact that they know He knows that. Just like Peter did.

So as we asked last week, we ask again this morning ...

"When the Lord Jesus looks into your heart, what does He see?"

Here now is ...

TODAY'S KEY REVELATION ...

*"Jesus is the One who can **FORGIVE** me for all my **SINS**.
He offers me a **FRESH START**."*

(John 1:29; Mark 2:5; Mark 2:10; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:9)

There is nothing more universally true of human beings than that they know they are not perfect ... they know that don't even consistently live up to their own standards, let alone God's. They know that they will surely 'Be exposed' on the Day they stand before Christ and give account. They could (and should) despair and some do. The Bible calls this '*imperfection*' – this '*falling short of perfection*' – **SIN**.

But many human beings, if not almost all of them, take comfort in the fact that 'nobody's perfect'.

"We are all members of an 'imperfect' race", they think. "Surely He cannot just pick me out – we are all in the same boat. No human being is actually much better (from a perfection standpoint) than any other."

The problem comes (and the comfort leaves) once we discover that the ONE who knows us perfectly did Himself take on human flesh and achieve that very level of perfection that we find so unattainable and that He holds us to the very standard of perfection that He Himself demonstrated.

We are not going to be compared to one another- we are going to be compared to Him and it's going to be very obvious to all the heavenly hosts that we have fallen terribly short.

All human beings will be recognized for what they are ... fallen, sinful members of a fallen, sinful race - completely unacceptable for entrance into the perfection of Heaven.

Here now is where we begin to understand the significance of **Today's Key and Most Vitally Important Revelation ...**

*“Jesus is the One who can **FORGIVE** me for all my **SINS**.
He offers me a **FRESH START**.”*

Wrap your minds and hearts now around Today's Key Scriptures as though you are hearing them for the first time (perhaps you are). I've arranged them under several categories of insight.

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

1. Jesus KNEW He had been sent to earth to provide forgiveness for sins ...

* *“Behold, the **LAMB** of **GOD** who takes away the **SIN** of the **WORLD**”
(John 1:29)*

These words were spoken by John the Baptism who had been commissioned to 'Prepare the Way for the Lord' – these words marked the culmination of that commission – these were 'Words of Identification and Introduction'. It's as though John was saying ... *“Here He is – My work is done.”*

Notice the emphasis of those words ... *‘He is the One who will deal with your sin’*. In fact, He will *‘take it away’* ... He will remove its burden from you’.

If you had heard John say those things, if you were one who had been feeling burdened down by the guilt of your sins, would you not have wanted to learn more of this man – would you not have wanted to *‘Give yourself to this man’* – to find in him *‘Release and Relief from that burden’*?

* *“Son, your **SINS** are **FORGIVEN**.”
(Mark 2:5)*

These words were actually spoken by Jesus Himself – Here He was doing exactly what John had said he would do ... *‘Forgiving Sins’*. This was a man, completely paralyzed, brought to Jesus by four friends ... His physical affliction was obvious to all – his spiritual affliction not so much.

His physical affliction was a problem for the duration of his earthly life – His spiritual affliction was a problem for all eternity.

Jesus dealt with the more serious of his problems first. He forgave him of his sins and thus declared him *‘Fit for heaven’*.

If you had been that man and if you had known what was at stake and if you had been given a choice, which '*healing*' would you have chosen?

The point was ... Jesus much more wanted to be known as '*One who could and would forgive sins*' than as one who could merely '*Heal the body*'.

However, in this instance he would do both for the religious leaders who were always '*keeping an eye on him*' questioned his authority to make such a pronouncement regarding sins. And to them he responded ...

* "*The Son of Man has **AUTHORITY** on earth to **FORGIVE** sins.*"
(Mark 2:10)

And then he performed a miracle of physical healing that they could see to verify that the miracle of spiritual healing that they could not see had also been done.

He had the authority to do both and he exercised that authority right there in front of them. They could not deny the physical but they had to accept the spiritual by faith. Some did – some didn't.

However, there is no doubt that '*Jesus Christ knew that He had been sent to earth to provide forgiveness for sins*'. These accounts in the Gospels were '*attention - getters*' – they were individual '*spotlight moments*' that drew the attention of the world to Jesus' ultimate purpose for coming to earth – to provide forgiveness for sins.

Consider now these verses under this second '*Insight Category*' ...

2. God Provided A WAY By Which It Could Be DONE ...

* "*He himself bore our **SINS** in His **BODY** of the Tree (cross)
so that we might **DIE** to sins and live for **RIGHTEOUSNESS**;
by His **WOUNDS** we have been **HEALED**.*"
(1 Peter 2:24)

If sinners burdened down by guilt had only one verse to read, I would suggest this one. Here is the plan of God to forgive sinners through the Person of Jesus Christ revealed. Jesus the perfect one, took upon himself all the imperfections of men – all the sinful thots and deeds of men – and suffered judgment for them.

And in this verse is revealed the ultimate purpose of God and it's not just to forgive sinners – it's to transform sinners into something completely different from what they had previously been.

God has no desire to simply have a world full of people who consider themselves to be '*sinners saved by grace*'. He desires to have a world of people who consider themselves (through their identification with Christ) to be '*dead to sin and alive for righteousness*' just like Jesus was when He walked upon the earth.

And the reason that this '*transformation*' is not only a desirability but a possibility and even a probability is because '*His wounds have healed us*'.

The very domination of sin and the devastation brought by a heart filled with sin has been removed from us.

O my friends, what damage we do to that verse and what limitation we bring into our lives when we choose to view it primarily in terms of things physical.

This is not a verse intended to inspire '*Healing Services*' ... this is a verse intended to inspire '*Revival Services*'.

This is a verse that cries out to all men and women (saved as well as lost) to embrace the fullness of the life that Christ's Death on the Cross can provide and that the Spirit of God has come to produce.

Here now is how the Apostle Paul, who met the Risen, Glorified Christ on the Damascus Road, expressed it.

* "God made Him who had **NO** sin to be sin for us,
so that in **HIM** we might **BECOME** the righteousness of God."
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Here again we see the great substitution and the great transformation anticipated by the actions of the Almighty on behalf of the fallen, sinful human race. God has stepped in and provided a means whereby sinful human beings can in fact become righteous in His eyes and in the eyes of the world just like Jesus was.

He became like us so that we might become like Him as we "Walk with '*Pneuma*'" through the fallen society that surrounds us.

Let's complete this categorical insight now by considering this verse found in the Epistle to the Hebrews ...

* "How much more will the **BLOOD** of Jesus ...
CLEANSE our **CONSCIENCES** from acts that lead to **DEATH**,
so that we may **SERVE** the Living God!"
(Hebrews 9:14)

What a wondrous word is '*Cleansing*' ... It adds such a vivid image to the word '*Forgiving*' ... '*Cleansing*' removes the evidence of what had previously been there.

This is indeed the '***Fresh Start***' that today's ***Key Revelation*** spoke of ...

"Jesus is the One who can ***FORGIVE*** me for all my **SINS**.
He offers me a **FRESH START**."

So often our lives as Followers of Christ (our hearts and minds especially) are filled with 'evidence of our past' - 'stains of sin' we could call it - guilt and remorse and regret and the endless re-playing of things.

This verse says that Christ's Purpose is to 'Cleanse our Conscience' from these unprofitable and even deadly behaviors. Inside my own mind and heart, I need to say ...

'If God has forgiven me, if Christ has suffered for me, then I am indeed forgiven and the wrongful deeds of my past have been fully paid for and I am ready to get on with the living of this new life I have been given.'

This 'Cleansed Conscience' - this 'Life of Service to the Living God' - is God's Plan for Man. This is God's Will and Desire for man - for each of us in this room this morning.

God has provided the way whereby it can be done - Sinful human beings can be forgiven and salvaged - transformed and re-calibrated. Given as it were: '**A Fresh Start**'.

Here now is our final categorical insight ...

3. Each Human Being DETERMINES whether or not it WILL be done ...

One verse will suffice - one verse that sums up all that we have said this morning and that identifies the 'condition' under which God's Forgiveness and Cleansing can be received.

Here it is ...

* "If we **CONFESS** our sins (own up to them),
He is **FAITHFUL** and **JUST** and will **FORGIVE** us our sins
and **PURIFY** us from **ALL** unrighteousness."
(1 John 1:9)

It's so straightforward that I will simply let it stand as it is and let it say what it says. In a word - If we will do the part that only **we** can do, God will do the part that only **He** can do. We **Confess** our sins and He **Forgives** them through Christ.

And so we come to today's final and culminating that ...

Final That ...

The second step in this investigative journey is to realize that **JESUS CHRIST** the Son of God has the **AUTHORITY** to **FORGIVE** you for all your **SINS** and that He **OFFERS** you a **FRESH START** in your life.

Are you **READY** to **CONFESS** that you are a **SINNER** in **NEED** of **FORGIVENESS** - Are you **READY** to ask Him to **FORGIVE** you for all your sins and grant you that **FRESH START**?